THE IDLER

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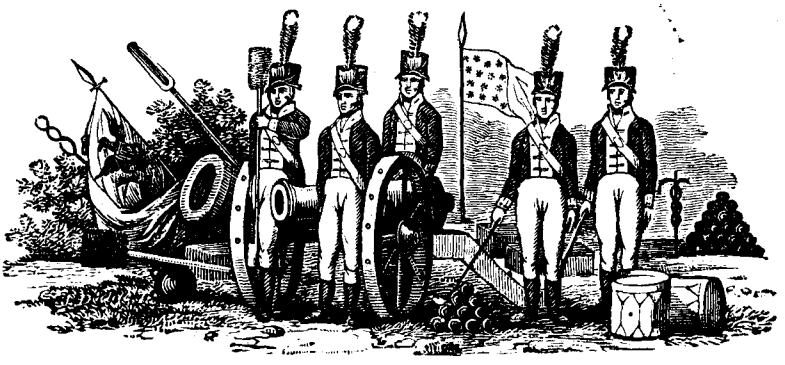
The Pentagon Siege

China and SE Asia

The New City Council



"The United States has returned 437 acres of El Paso, Tex., to Mexico, delivering on an agreement reached in 1910. President Johnson hailed the action as an example of the United States keeping a commitment."

--Washington Evening Star

WASHINGTON, D.C.
November 1967

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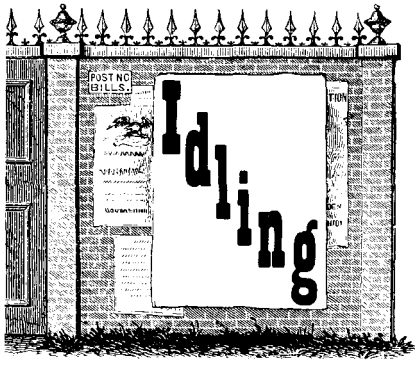

ON October 21, more than 8,000 troops successfully defended the Pentagon against an assortment of grasspuffers, hay-haired chicks bearing non-recoiling flowers, middle-aged female peace strikers, college professors, priests, plain people, and Norman Mailer. The assault force was of uncertain size--the Pentagon estimates 30,000, the protesters more--but whatever the count, the number of front-line troops was quite small, once you subtract the logistical manpower such as sandwich bringers, girl friends, the curious, the timid, the ambivalent and a group trying to find a green bus with white stripes that was due to leave for Newark a half hour ago. The attackers were unarmed except for their indignation and ultimately posed as serious a military threat as would a score of drunk Eygptian soldiers weaving across the Sinai Desert towards Tel Aviv.

Nevertheless, an extreme escalation somehow developed during the preparations for that Saturday's confrontation and by the time the dawn of the 21st peered over the Capitol dome, the U. S. was ready for anything short of Armageddon. Just what the strategists on the government's side anticipated was not quite clear. Certainly the hippies--who had yet to stage an effective riot--could not have been the cause of their concern. And surely the Pentagon did not expect the radical or anarchist left to muster enough strength (or unity) to require the sort of defenses posted. Was it Dr. Spock maybe? Dagmar Wilson? It would have taken only a single brave man to hit the little lady over the head and be done with her (as later events indicated). Perhaps it was one sect's plan to levitate the Pentagon 300 feet off the ground and make it vibrate and turn orange that had them unnerved.

More likely, however, the massive government response to the protest stemmed not so much from a realistic assessment of the danger posed as from an instinctive reliance upon power and perhaps even from that subliminal sense of insecurity men get when the untenability of their argument causes them to exaggerate it.

The government that spent a million dollars keeping the hippies out of the Pentagon is, after all, the same government that is spending billions in the most futilely expensive military operation of all time. It is a government incapable of subtlety, void of sensitivity, baffled by the dictates of reason, and callous to the admonishments of justice. Physical power and money are its tools and when they don't work, it tries more of the same.

And this is the government whose defense of its Vietnam policy has become increasingly hysterical and bizarre. The President and his senior aides have launched an offensive against the war's critics with an overwrought rhetoric that could only be the language of frustrated and frightened men, men surrounded by the protest of logic as the Pentagon was encircled that gentle day this fall.

The fact that must be slowly becoming apparent to Mr. Johnson & Co. is that there has been a steady attrition in support for the war. Nothing the ad-

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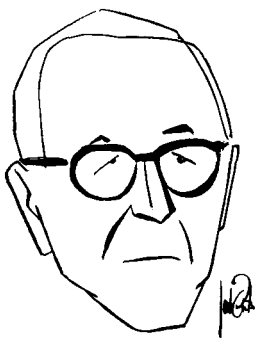
ministration has done has been able to halt it. It is becoming more serious every day as public men who have held or restrained their counsel for years begin to speak out. These defections--like that of Morris Udall--are not the result of too much LSD. It was not a psychedelic cult that emboldened Eugene McCarthy to intensify his criticism of the war.

The Administration pretends not to notice. The Vice President, once himself the victim of similar infantile attacks, refers to the anti-war demonstrators as "unpatriotic." The Secretary of State (who, SNCC's John Wilson pointed out to the protesters, "didn't even know what was going on in his own house") wanders around the country conjuring up bogiemen such as a "billion Chinese on the mainland armed with nuclear weapons." And the President continues to deal with Vietnam at every public turn with soap operatic maudlinisms.

This political bufoonery, which provides some slight cover for the desperate position of the Administration, is faithfully and soberly reported by a press which simultaneously professes to be shocked and amazed by the antics of the New Left. For my part, I prefer the obscenities of Norman Mailer to the idiocies of Dean Rusk. Mailer has never been in a position to endanger the lives and the honor of 200 million Americans, not to mention all the Vietnamese. And the revolution proclaimed by the radicals, unfortunately containing more romance than reality, offers but an increment of the danger found in the counter-revolution against the American ideal currently being carried out by this Administration.

But for much of the press, the odor of a hippie causes far more concern than the stench of a hundred dead Vietnamese. To be sure, this concern sometimes manifests itself in an almost fatherly way. The Washington Post, on the day before the march, offered a well-reasoned program of behavior for the demonstrators. It was the best thing of the sort I had seen since my grade school teacher patiently explained why we shouldn't run in the halls.

But such counsel ignores an important point. The Washington Post is not the scoutmaster of the New Left; it is part of the problem, one of the enemy. It shows how little understood is the national schism today, that the very institutions and individuals under attack waste their energies on such paternalistic lectures. It is as if Robert McNamara stayed up nights writing Ho Chi Minh advice on how to conduct the war against us, or as if George Romney suggested to Lyndon Johnson ways of gaining additional support for the war among GOP governors.



DR. SPOCK:
8000 Troops for Him?

Gratuitous advice to the radicals from those who are not even in sympathy with their goals is rightly suspect. One of the clearest demands of both the New Left and the Black Powerites is that change cannot take place on the terms of the establishment. The establishment cannot determine how the rebellion against it will occur.

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The fact that one does sympathize with the goals of the radicals does not mean one must commit himself to every call to action by factions within the movement. The strength of the case against Vietnam, the strength of the case of the Negro movement, is that they are pressed on many different levels. Some, including myself, are not psychologically inclined to have their heads bashed in by a U. S. Marshall guarding the Pentagon. Still it seems almost inevitable that extrication from the mess of SE Asia or of our cities will not come without vehement, even violent, confrontation. Those willing to risk that confrontation on behalf of those less bold are more to be honored than censured.

-(s. s.)

HUGH HAYNIE ...

"THERE GOES ANOTHER VIETNAM CRITIC! SIC HIM, BOY! SIC HIM!"

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Washington Local

An Explanation

WITH THIS ISSUE of the Idler commences a column on local Washington affairs. Many of our readers live in and around the District, a city that after many years of community torpor is slowly coming awake. There is, at present, little independent commentary on local matters available in print while at the same time there is a mass of local issues upon which to comment. In order not to shortchange any of our out-of-town readers, we have added four more pages to the Idler. In addition, we hope that even nonresidents may find some interest in this column. After all, until Washington gets home rule, it is your city too.

The New Council

IT IS HARD to see how the new city council will avoid being magnificently mediocre. Lyndon Johnson has created a superficial distribution along racial and geographic lines but neatly circumvented the purpose of such distribution: to give fair representation to the various interest groups of the city. By picking a Republican Negro or a staunchly middle-class resident of Anacostia, you can stick the black and white pin tacks into the city map and everything looks fine. But you're not all that much better off than with an all-white council from west of Rock Creek Park.

The new council, in aggregate, represents a fusion of the old noblesse obligers of Upper Northwest with the extremist moderates of the Negro middle-class. Such a combination reeks of respectability but not much else.

Reliance upon this group to set aggressive new policies for the city is about as futile an exercise as Charlie Brown's vigil in the pumpkin patch. Most of the council members have been politely absent from the bloody civic battles of the past and there isn't much cause to expect them to behave differently in the future. Which is one reason, I suspect, that Lyndon Johnson hired them.

Tick off the recent struggles in which men and women of public inclination could have become involved if they so wished: home rule, housing, freeways, welfare policy, employment, education, public transportation. Then ask: where was this crew? With the exception of Walter Fauntroy and --to a lesser extent-- Polly Shackleton, the new councilmen tiptoed into one or two issues at best, some less. And while I can't prove it, I'd be willing to lay money on the bet that more than a few scoffed freely at the efforts of the likes of Julius Hobson, Marion Barry, Joe Rauh--even Walter Fauntroy.

Maybe the experience of being on the Council will work a transformation in their characters. It is possible, although for the rest of the city it's a fairly risky form of on-the-job training. The freeway issue would be a good test. An elected council in this city would stop the freeway program, because support of the highways is virtually nil in the District. But will this council? It doesn't look that way.

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Admittedly there are alot of unknowns in the new setup. Walter Washington will undoubtedly be a more able executive than any of the old commissioners and more responsive to the needs of all those in the city who have yet to be properly represented. If the militants keep the pressure on him, he might even make a good commissioner.

Thomas Fletcher is anybody's guess. The militants have a job here, too. They've got to provide him with a Head Start course in District affairs so he'll be prepared for the creaky educational system of the establishment. Walter Fauntroy can help. He suffers from the chronic problem of successful Negroes with a political bent. He walks with one foot in the street and the other on plush carpets. There's considerable danger of hernia from this sort of perambulation, but he has managed it better than most and therefore can be quite a valuable man.

Polly Shackleton has a role, too. She can show some of the respectable Negroes on the Council how they can maintain their status and do some good for the city at the same time. The prominent Negro is often a very passive sort of fellow, subconsciously fearful that at the first sign of militancy the Man will send him back to the ghetto. There are some Negro civic organizations in this town more conservative than the Board of Trade. Maybe Mrs. Shackleton, who is a fighter as well as being a very respectable lady, can serve as a new model for Council members with this hangup.

And perhaps some of the other members will surprise us. John Hechinger, if nothing else, should know how to move dead wood. J. C. Turner might wish to dedicate himself to encouraging labor unions to opening up to Negroes. Mary Haywood might investigate why Negro homeowners are so often flimflammed. And Stan Anderson might want to discover why the Recreation Dept. moves so slowly towards providing equal facilities to all parts of the city.

Yes, there could be surprises. But don't count on it. The new government--like the old--lacks the voices of those most in need of being heard. And even the most benevolent colonialism can't compensate for that sort of silence.

THE HON. WALTER WASHINGTON

Commissioner of the City of Washington, alias "Mayor" -- a name given him by Lyndon Johnson and others who would have the District believe it has been granted a form of home rule, and by headline writers who, as usual, sacrifice accuracy whenever it doesn't fit.

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STILL, THERE'S NO need for tears over the departing Commissioners. One of the last acts of this turgid trio was to display once again how little interested they were in citizen participation in anything. The President had come up with a scheme to put a mixture of low, middle, and upper class housing on the old National Boy's Training School site in the Northeast part of the city. The plan could either be a boon to the city or just another in a long series of urban renewal disasters. The initial drawings indicated that the fundamental error of Southwest was to be repeated: housing was to be geographically isolated by class. There were other questions: Would there be adequate public transportation to jobs? Was the balance of the different types of housing correct? (It appeared that low income housing was getting badly shortchanged.) Where would the schools be and of what type? Where would the shopping and community services be located in the community? How would the social sterility of the Southwest experiment be avoided?

The President said it was to be a model community. The Commissioners held a hearing, but instead of attending themselves sent a Corporation Counsel minion to take the testimony. The citizens, naturally, were angry and the meeting broke up in a furor. The Commissioners eventually rescheduled the hearing, despite citizen protests that the matter should wait until the new government came in. (Walter Washington did, however, meet separately for several hours with a small group of civic leaders). Again, the Commissioners did not show up. But there was added representation from the District's side. Besides the hearing officer, the Commissioners sent several dozen policemen. They stood in the hallways, turned a lavatory into a ready-room, and lined the hearing hall. But the citizens were ready. Kenneth Kennedy, from Far NE, was called to testify. He stood up and read into the record a list of more than 30 organizations that urged the hearings be postponed. He attacked the government for the overwhelming presence of policemen at a public hearing and then, followed by ninety other persons, he walked out. It was a fine farewell salute to Messrs. Tobriner, Duncan and Mathe and a good warning to the new bunch--one that has not gone unheeded. One of the first acts of the new council was to set a date for an additional hearing on the question--to be attended, not only by the council but by the commissioner as well.

--(s. s.)

My life changes with the change of seasons.
Fall is coming: Earth has its good reasons.
The sun moves south to confirm the premise
Of earth tilting an invisible axis,
But the call of frantic cranes beating the high autumn air
With their slender wings: their lonely cries declare
More cause than a spatial geometric theory.
I only know my spine and voice turn weary
As the days begin to lie down early
And the crisp moon phases thru biting, surly
Wind. My life changes with the change of seasons.
Fall is coming: I have my reasons.

-- Erbin Crowell

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Containment of China In SE Asia

By George A. D. Fly

FOUR administrations over a span of twenty years have used the power of the American Republic to shape the internal politics of the Vietnamese nation. Our support of France before 1954 grew out of our determination to create strong states in western Europe; aid to France in Vietnam relieved French governments of some of the burdens of creating a viable economy. When the French withdrew from Vietnam our obligation ceased, but we continued to support governments in the southern half of Vietnam because Secretary Dulles believed that nations with communist leadership intended to expand their direct control of areas on their borders. SEATO, with clauses applying to non-signatory governments, is the formalization of Secretary Dulles' belief. It is, in short, containment policy applied to Southeast Asia. And Secretary Rusk has just endorsed that policy, although he is wary of giving it that name, by calling attention to the billion Chinese who "threaten" to invade the Southeast Asian peninsula. Does the policy of containment apply to this troubled area?

For the past millenium, native dynastic governments in the Southern Asian peninsula maintained their independence from Chinese dynasts by means of the tribute system, a method of diplomacy well suited to the needs of inter-governmental intercourse in that area. The tribute system was an easy burden for the native dynasties of the peninsula. It entailed sending missions to the Chinese court to recognize the cultural preeminence of Chinese civilization. Gifts were exchanged, elaborate ceremonies performed, and, usually, the emissaries went home richer than they had come to China.

From the Chinese side, the tribute system made it unnecessary for Chinese governments to maintain direct control in the peninsula. Various dynasties had tried to exert direct control of Vietnam before 939 A. D., but the result was endemic revolt. The Chinese learned that less than direct control was necessary. The tribute system evolved naturally.

The question that raises itself is this: why were the Chinese willing to forego direct control of the Southern Asian peninsula? The answer is not difficult to find.

China is an extremely difficult area to govern. Chinese dynasties that concentrated their energies on providing order within China endured. Dynasties that undertook expansion risked civil war and rebellion within China. The tribute system ensured tranquility on China's southern borders with a minimum effort and helped to ensure longevity of any particular dynasty. The only major expansion of Chinese territory in the last millenium came in the 18th century when Ch'ing dynasts felt constrained to exert control of nomadic peoples of the northwest borderlands. The Ch'ing--a foreign dy-

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JOHN FOSTER DULLES

nasty--permitted Chinese to settle Manchurian lands at the end of the last century, but this was an internal expansion since the Ch'ing were the "possessors" of Manchuria.

In sum, the prime business of the Chinese state was and is to govern China. War and expansion are the most dangerous games for any Chinese government wishing to continue its existence.

The policy of containment rests on George F. Kennan's interpretation of Russian history. Kennan argued that Russian tsars and emperors could reduce the danger of rebellion in Russia by expanding Russia's borders. The theory is that the new lands took the edge from rebellious energy because the armies of rebellion were satisfied to bring these new lands under cultivation. The policy of containment argued further that to close the possibility of Russian expansion would lead to a change in the nature of Russian politics. Kennen used the word "amelioration" to describe what might be called less autocracy, more democracy.

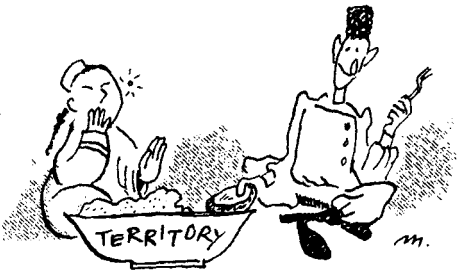
It does not matter whether Kennan's analysis of Russian history is correct. What does matter is that China is not Russia. It may be true that expansion helped Russian governments ensure their longevity. For Chinese rulers it had the opposite effect.

It also makes no difference whether Secretary Dulles understood either Russian or Chinese history. We only avoid responsibility for clear thought by damning our predecessors. But we must understand the false premise of the policy of containment in Southeast Asia or be doomed to bleed the American Republic white in a purposeless endeavor that creates the conditions we say we are fighting to avoid.

It is no argument to say that we are fighting to ensure democratic government in Southern Vietnam, for it is a grotesque misunderstanding of the purposes of this Republic to kill American men to shape the nature of politics in other nations.

It is no argument to say that we are there, hence, we must stay, for that is to admit that we understand neither the premises nor the possible outcome of our use of power.

And it is not neo-isolationism to understand that a strategic blunder is a strategic blunder. We are not preventing another Munich. We are ensuring that the conditions that led to Munich will recur, for we are acting to bring about that confrontation of powers from which we must either abjectly withdraw or drive forward into the thermonuclear unknown.



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The McDowell Papers

By Charles McDowell Jr.

SOMEBODY asked me the other day whatever happened to Mr. Bumbleton. When I got home in the evening I went next door and asked him, "Whatever happened to you, anyway?"

"I got a haircut if that's what you mean," he said.

"No, not that. The question comes from a fan of yours–some poor soul who has been missing the pontifical observations on public affairs that you used to contribute to a newspaper column."

"Oh. Well, I decided that contributing pontifical observations to a newspaper column was like carrying coal to a nuclear reactor. You guys are turning out pontifical observations and self-righteous wisdom at a rate undreamed of by us old-fashioned types."

"So what have you been doing with yourself, Mr. Bumbleton?"

"I've been playing the great American game–I've been gambling."

"GAMBLING? You've always gambled. Horses, football and baseball games, numbers, pool, golf, cards, the Miss America Pageant...."

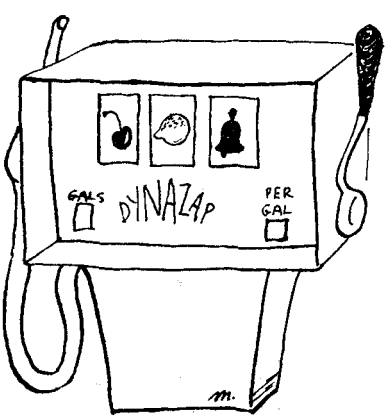
"True. But now I've gotten into the big game. I gamble at filling stations."

"At filling stations?"

"Sure. I frankly never thought I'd see the day when nearly every corner filling station would be a gambling den, but the day has come and I'm taking a piece of the action. I'm playing all the gasoline syndicates' gambling games, and it's practically a full-time occupation when you go at it as seriously as I do."

"How seriously is that?"

"In the beginning, when I needed say 12 gallons of gas, I bought a gallon at each of 12 filling stations. Then I started buying soft drinks, peanuts, gas caps, hose connections and things like that. Once I bought eight spark plugs



at eight different stations. I was really raking in the lottery tickets that come with each purchase. It was taking me a couple of hours every night just to sort out unmatched halves of tickets, paste stamps in albums, scratch things with the edge of a coin and wash things off little tickets to find the sercet number. But I had the fever. Just driving down the road I felt like I was in Las Vegas."

"It sounds like a lot of work."

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"Yes it was, and I wasn't making expenses. Oh, I won a dollar here and five dollars there, but it didn't cover the extra cost of my gas. Then I made my big decision--I decided to act on that line in all the gasoline gambling rules that says no purchase necessary."

"I'm told they have to say that to conform to certain trade regulations, Mr. Bumbleton. Do you really think it's sporting to play in the lotteries without making a purchase?"

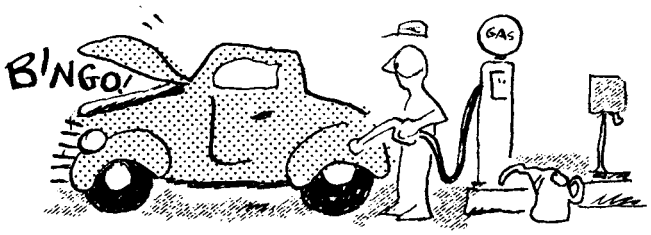
"All I know about gambling is to give yourself every advantage under the rules. And I still do buy gas--a gallon at a time--when I need it. Anyway, I divide my days three ways now. I pick up lottery tickets for eight hours; sort, paste, scratch, wash and match 'em up for eight hours, and sleep eight hours. Under the American free enterprise system, a man has to be willing to work hard to get ahead."

"Are you getting ahead?"

"I've won some good money, yes, a lot of single dollars, some fives, a few twenty-fives. If I can match the other half of any of 226 halves of just one kind of play money, I'll win $100 each time, just to show you my potential. If I can find a few John Unitas stamps, I'll hit one of the games for $25 each time. And all I need is a Charley Taylor stamp to win a Mustang, or six Charley Taylor stamps to win six Mustangs for that matter."

"Remarkable, Mr. Bumbleton."

"Yes, and by the way, if you know anybody who has a Charley Taylor, I'd be willing to trade 745 Ken Willards for it."



(Richmond Times-Dispatch)

"That's all very interesting, but what I really came over for was to ask if you'd like to play a game of cribbage?"

"What are the prizes? You give Mustangs or just cash?"

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--UPI Dispatch

(But not one cent for tribute. . . .)

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Editor: sam smith
413 Sixth St. NE
Washington, D. C. 20002
202-546-9662

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Circulation, correspondence, and coffee:
Saundra Joyner

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The Corner Aphorist

By Sam A. Darcy

SPECTRUM '67 -- As Christmas approaches, LBJ hates "black power," Dean Rusk makes war because he fears the "Yellow Peril " (shades of Kaiser Wilhelm), J. Edgar Hoover wants more police to battle "Red" ideas, LeRoi Jones abhors the "whites," and the country is getting the blues. A rather colorful season for the Prince of Peace!

CALIFORNIA is offering yet another movie star to Congress: Shirley Temple. We can't wait till they nominate Lassie. She'll outrun them all.

COUSIN BARNEGAT, amateur philosopher, ex-chicken farmer and unlicensed authority stopped in on his way to a temporary job.

> "What I don't understand is why man acts like a chicken. A writer about Chickens (Don Marquis-- we looked it up) once wrote, 'I have noticed that when chickens quit quarrelling over their food they often find that there is enough for all of them. I wonder if it might not be the same for the human race."

Our entire staff rose magnificently to the opportunity. They explained about national rivalries, capitalism and communism, imperialism and colonies, world markets and raw materials, advanced and backward nations, and many other things. In the end it was unanimous -- all conceded they didn't understand why men act like chickens. And Barney left for his temporary job -- as a chicken flicker.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD grocer was complaining about how bad business was. "But the president," we told him, "says that it was never better." "For him its better", he replied. "Look at the location he's got."

THE WAR HAWKS, especially the generals, keep taunting the doves that they are not military experts. Maybe so. But if the generals and the militarist jingoes are such experts how come that less than 14 million almost illiterate, half-starved Vietnam peasants have, despite their Quisling government, so badly stopped the greatest military power the world has ever known? How come that we are barely holding on in South Vietnam? How come that our anger and frustration brings us to bomb women and children in North Vietnam? How come that we've spent almost one hundred billion

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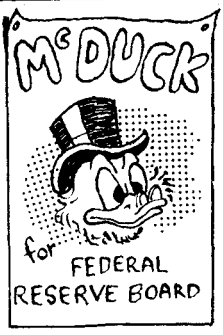
dollars of hard earned American money, yet are nowhere. How come that the whole world has turned against us?

Maybe Churchill was right. War is too serious a business to be left to generals and "military experts".

AND HOW CAN anyone accept the pious pleas for "defense of democracy and the U. S. in Vietnam" made by the war hawks since to this date NOT ONE SON OF EVEN ONE BIG-MOUTH WAR HAWK is or has been where the battles are? They have already sent the sons of 100,000 other American families to death and disaster, and a million more to await their turn. What hypocrisy!

ALL THIS TALK of the military reminds us of a rhyme by our favorite genius, the poet of Broadway, Yip Harburg, addressed to a soldier:

You're paid to stop a bullet
It's a soldier's job they say,
And so you stop the bullet,
And then they stop your pay.



THIS THANKSGIVING season is a good time to remember that despite everything and everything and everything the wonder and adventure of life remains, and it's man's instinct to live it with zest, to learn everything, experience everything, taste, smell, feel, see, and sense everything. An old friend, the Reverend Robert Whitaker, once wrote a poem of thanksgiving:

O heart of mine, be thankful yet,
Through all of mankind's madness,
That gladness lives, nor men forget
Life's glory in its sadness.

Flotsam & Jetsam

WE WONDER HOW many papers picked up the story about the charges being dropped against several of the peace demonstrators at the Pentagon--dropped at the request of the U. S. prosecutor. The reason given by Assistant U. S. Attorney Steve Long for the action was that the demonstrators in question had been "pretty badly beaten" by U. S. Marshalls. The Justice Dept. better look into this man; he sounds like some sort of hippie making remarks like that.

GENERAL HERSHEY has indicated once again the grandiose role he conceives for himself. He has recommended that local draft boards immediately draft those who physically interfere with military recruiting--such as has occured on several college campuses. The general needs to be reminded that we have courts to take care of justice. It is neither legal nor proper for draft boards to assume judicial functions such as punishing anti-war college students by sending them draft notices.

A TELEVISION STATION in Washington boasts of having "Washington's earliest midday news program."

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A $1000 A COUPLE fund-raising dinner for the Democrats was recently held in this city. The guest list was kept secret. We don't blame them. It's not the sort of thing you want to brag about these days.

THIS HAS BEEN THE WORST session of Congress in recent years. Retrogressive, stupid, petulent, cruel. But then it's happened before. Mark Twain once said: "Reader, suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself."

A READER SENDS us regular reports from the Federal Communications Commission Complaints Branch which are among the better government literature around. For example: "One writer stated that the new 'season' on television 'stinks from here to Mars . . . especially the attacks on the poor Indians. Every Indian who ever died defending his land from the white thieves which we were has been killed at least ten times on TV.' The writer enclosed with his complaint a copy of a newspaper clipping which recounted statistics pertaining to the new television season with respect to the number (to date) of dead Indians, cavalrymen, Nazis, rustlers, number of bartenders wounded, teenagers gone bezerk, elephants injured and nuns orbited.'" Another writer complained that "a radio station's announcers mispronounced so many words, used such bad grammar and employed so many malapropisms that their statements were virtually unintelligible. The station reportedly broadcast in a single newscast that our Marines were being "harnessed" by the Viet Cong; that hurricane "Beelia" was coming; and that the U. S. Coast and 'Gordanian' Survey had reported an earthquake."

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